

Cervical (Neck) Pain

Overview

Cervical disc disease involves the acute or chronic pressure of material from an intervertebral disc pressing on or around the spinal cord in the area of the neck.

The exact cause of disc degeneration is unknown but in many cases there is a change in the content of the disc from a soft, pliable gel to stiff mineral that can slowly compress the spinal cord or suddenly burst into the spinal canal. Discs in the cervical region of the spine can affect the front legs and the back legs to varying degrees. This disc disease can affect one side of the body or both sides.

Dogs may show only mild neck pain all the way through to complete paralysis of all four legs without the ability to perceive any sensation whatsoever. Sudden onset neck pain is the most common clinical sign.

Chondrodystrophic breeds such as dachshunds and Pekingese are among the breeds more commonly affected. There is a higher incidence in beagles. Most dogs are middle aged and there is no sex predilection.

Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:

- Cervical pain is generally diagnosed by history, physical examination findings including a neurologic and orthopedic exam and x-rays of the neck.
- Treatment depends on the underlying cause of the neck pain, severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Treatment may consist of anti-inflammatory medication and muscle relaxants. In severe cases, surgery may be recommended. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

What to Watch for*:

- Sudden onset of neck pain
- Clumsiness or "walking drunk"
- Holding one front leg up when sitting
- Inability to walk

**Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*